

Christ Is All You Need

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Preacher: Matt Coburn

[0 : 00] Well, good morning.

Good morning.

I realized that it's so easy for this life to be out of kilter, isn't it? Things don't work the way they should, and things are not right as they ought to be.

Obviously, shower heads and door locks can be fixed. They're little. They're mundane. They're part of our everyday life in a fallen world. But it reminds us that all is not as it should be in our world as well.

As Jonathan prayed, we think about countries around the world where famine and warfare are destroying people's lives.

[1 : 34] They're dying in hunger and in violence. We pick up the newspapers and we see how deeply affected even our own society is as racism shows its ugly head again and again.

Where the mistreatment of women shows itself again and again. We think of the trials and the tragedies of this world and our heart cries out.

It's not right. It's not the way it's supposed to be. And we want justice. We want righteousness. We want things to be made right and to put back the way they're supposed to be.

So we organize protests, come up with clever hashtags, and call for change. And that's right. We ought to cry out against the wrongness of the world.

We ought to rail against the way the world does not work the way it was supposed to. And this deep-seated sense that we all have that that's true. That's right.

[2 : 46] God affirms that. But even as we look at this, particularly if you're a student of history like I am, you realize humans have been working since the beginning of time to make the world a better place.

And we haven't succeeded, have we? If we are honest, the older I get, the bigger the problem looks. The deeper the sin is.

The greater the dislocation between what is and what ought to be in our lives and in our world. And I get weary of it. I get weary of a broken world.

I get weary of not seeing things change. I get weary of my own failure. And I get weary of the things I have to walk through because of the fallenness of this world.

Maybe you're like me this morning. Maybe you're still young and youthful and hoping by protest and change we can actually make this world no longer feel that way.

[3 : 57] But I tell you that though that hope is right and even that work is right for us to do, the message of Christianity is that there is a greater hope in the midst of this.

There is something greater for us to look to and to stand on in the midst of this world. And it is very simply the person of Jesus Christ.

In him we find answers both to the longings for righteousness and justice and an answer to the despair that we can fall into as we face it.

And this brings us to our passage this morning, the book of Colossians. If you want to turn with me there, it's 983 in your pew Bibles. We're going to look at Colossians 1 verses 15 through 23.

The last couple of weeks what we have heard is an apostle writing to this church that he's never been to but that he loves. He's writing to them to encourage them in their faith with a concern that they might be losing the clarity of their faith.

[5 : 17] That Christ really is enough for them. That they might be thinking they need something more or something else. We've seen in verses 3 through 8 how Paul writes with thanksgiving for the work of God in their lives.

For seeing how the gospel of Jesus Christ has changed them. We see how in verses 9 through 14 he then has prayed for them. Praying that that would continue and even more.

That it would be abundant in their lives. And then we come to our passage this morning. In your Bible there's a break. There's a new section heading.

But in the original it's actually a relative clause. It's describing the beloved son from verse 13. So let's read this together.

Colossians 1 verses 15 and following. He is, that is Christ, is the image of the invisible God.

[6 : 19] The firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created in heaven and on earth. Visible and invisible. Whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities.

All things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things. And in him all things hold together.

And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning. The firstborn from the dead. That in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.

And through him to reconcile to himself all things. Whether on earth or in heaven. Making peace by the blood of his cross. And you who were once alienated and hostile in mind.

Doing evil deeds. He has now reconciled in his body. Body of flesh. By his death. In order to present you holy and blameless. And above reproach before him.

[7 : 22] If indeed you continue in the faith. Stable and steadfast. Not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard. Which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven.

And of which I, Paul, became a minister. Will you pray with me? Lord, as we look at this passage this morning.

We do ask that you would open our eyes. To see the greatness of Christ. Lord, that you would help us to grow in confidence.

In faith. In him. As the all sufficient. And all supreme one. Lord, that in the face of this fallen, broken world that we live in.

Lord, that we can continue in hope. Because of Christ. Lord, I pray for your help this morning. As we look at this passage together.

[8 : 22] Lord, use me. And speak through my words. Lord, that we might hear. You. This morning. We pray these things in Jesus name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Friends, we are on rare ground as we look at this passage this morning. The English versions don't show it, but this passage, particularly verses 15 through 19, is actually a hymn of praise.

The prose actually changes in the original language. The cadence and the rhythm, it feels like and it seems like. and many believe that it is an old hymn that was sung in the early church, whether Paul wrote it or whether he was appropriating it and using it for this particular context.

There's this song of praise to Jesus that exalts the glories of Christ and lifts up before us how he is all that we really need.

[9 : 34] He's all that we really need when it feels like life is falling apart. He is all that we need when it feels like it's just getting worse. And that's what we're gonna look at this morning.

In those two sections, verses 15 through 17, we'll think about how it is that Christ is holding us together when we feel like it's falling apart. The second one, how Christ is making it right when it feels like it's all going wrong.

So let's look at that. This morning. First of all, verses 15 through 17. There's so many rich theological pictures here.

I wish I had time. We could spend the rest of the fall just preaching on this. I'll just preach on 15, the first half of it this morning and then we'll go on. Does that sound good? No, I'm kidding. We won't really do that.

We're gonna keep moving through. But so much rich. In referring back to this kingdom of the beloved son that he says believers have been brought into by their faith in Christ, he now lifts up, what is the character and the nature of this son who rules over this kingdom?

[10 : 48] And he says, first of all, he is fully God. He is the image image of the invisible God. And by image, he doesn't mean a replica.

He doesn't mean a projection of. He means an exact representation of the fullness of God is seen in this one Jesus Christ.

And he is the firstborn of all creation, which does not mean, as a Jehovah's Witness would argue, that he is the first created being, but instead it means that he is the firstborn taking the place of preeminence and priority over.

So he is the firstborn over all creation is the best way to see that. Firstborn in the Bible is a position. It's not merely a temporal term.

Although Christ was birth, because Christ existed from all eternity past, and yet also he takes this place of being over all of the creation. And we know that, particularly because then in verse 16 it goes on and says, for by him all things were made.

[11 : 58] And so we know that Christ isn't a part of what was made. In fact, he was the agent by which God created all things in the world. And so we're lifting up this person, Jesus Christ.

And remember, this is a generation after Jesus walked the earth. He was a man who had hair and clothes that you could touch, that you could eat a meal with. And Paul is saying, that man is this incredibly exalted God in the flesh who has come to be for you, the one over all creation.

And he goes on and he says, all things were created in him. There's not a single thing in this world that doesn't come from Christ. And particularly it seems he's focusing, as the concern goes on in the books, he's focusing on powers that we think might be beyond his control.

It seems like in the Corinthian church there was some fear, particularly that there might be some spiritual powers, maybe angels, maybe, it's not clear, we're guessing, because we don't know for sure.

But some power that was beyond what Christ and the gospel could actually address. And Paul is very explicit here. There is nothing that was not created by Christ.

[13 : 23] There is no economic or socio-political structure. There is no culture and no worldview. There is no spiritual power or physical malady or condition.

There is no addiction or sin. There is no government or legal system. No social clique or grouping. There is nothing in this creation that did not flow from his created purpose that does not come from him.

Now look, he is not the author of evil. But in every structure, in every power, in everything, Christ says, I am over this.

Nothing is outside of my control. It has sprung from me. And as you see, it goes on in verse 17. It hasn't just sprung from my creative power, but I am the one who sustains it.

There is nothing that continues in this world that I don't uphold. This is true of the physical world. It is God.

[14 : 30] It is Christ who makes atoms spin around the nucleus. It is Christ who holds gravitational constants constant. It is Christ who makes life flow from DNA and biochemistry and things that are far beyond my understanding.

And it is Christ who sustains countries and nations and societies. It is Christ who holds it together so that it might not be as bad as it could be.

Christ holds all these things together. together. And not only does Colossians here say they are from him and they are sustained by him, but they are made for him.

Do you see this? The end of verse 16. They were created through him and they were created for him. All of these things, the physical world, the social world, the world of humanity, all of these things were created so that in them, in their created goodness, they would glorify Christ.

That they would be centered around him. That he would take the first place in all of them and that they would live for his glory. Glory. Paul says, this is the son who rules the kingdom that you've been brought into.

[16 : 03] The one who created all of these things and he is over all of it. Now I know, I know that's hard to believe.

That's a hard message to swallow because I see you as you sit in my office and as we talk about your lives. Christ is really holding all things together in my marriage that's falling apart.

Christ is holding all things together when the society that I live in, the school system, is completely coming unraveled. Christ is holding all things together when I don't think I'm going to be able to pass my exams or make it through my program.

Christ is holding all things together when I've lost my job and I'm losing and I don't have any money. Christ is holding it together when I'm in the hospital again and all the procedures and all the diagnoses don't seem to be fixing what ails me.

It's easy, isn't it, to lose sight of the fact that all of this is from Christ and through Christ and for Him.

[17 : 24] He's got the whole world in His hands. Even the worst of it is not outside of His sovereign power and control.

Paul says, remember Him. Look to Him. See Him high and exalted over all things and trust that when it all looks like it's falling apart for you, He's got it in His hands because He is the one over all creation.

You see, our greatest fear I think is that when things fall apart we think it's truly out of control. We think it's bad and it's only going to get worse and we think there's no way.

It's out of our control. It's out of anybody's control. I think we fear and so we don't trust. But the good news as Paul goes on is that not only is Christ the one who is over all in creation even in its fallenness but now He says He is in the midst of this now fallen creation.

He is making a new creation. He is over a new creation that He has begun. We see this in verse 20 where it talks about Him being the one who is going to reconcile all things to Himself.

[19 : 08] And this is where we see that Christ is not only holding it together when things are falling apart but Christ is also making it right when it feels like it's all going wrong. Reconciling all things.

Have you noticed by the way in Colossians 1 how often the idea of all has been repeated? Look with me just in the verses that we have before us.

In verse 15 all of creation. In verse 16 all things were created and again all things were created through Him and for Him. In verse 17 He is before all things in Him all things hold together.

Verse 18 in everything He might be preeminent. Verse 19 all the fullness of God and verse 20 through Him to reconcile to Himself all things.

Christ is saying that He's going to take all of these things and He's going to make them right by reconciling them to Himself. And what does that mean reconciling all things to Himself?

[20 : 18] We often think of reconciliation as a relational term. Right? We have a broken relationship and we need to reconcile them. And that's inappropriate and that's a good biblical picture and a good understanding of what reconciliation is.

And it's very clear in other places for instance in Ephesians 2 it talks about God reconciling Jew and Gentile and bringing them together and that's very clearly bringing together of broken relationships.

But here I think it might actually be there's a different way that we use reconcile in our world today I think might be helpful and that's an accountant. Now I'm not very good at being an accountant but I remember when I was younger and for those of you who are under the age of 40 you're just going to have to imagine that this is true but when you used to get a bank statement in the mail right some of you still get that on the back page there was a blank chart and you know what you did with that chart you wrote down all of the withdrawals and all the checks you wrote and then you checked the math to reconcile your accounting with the bank's accounting to make sure that it was brought back to a proper orientation right the idea is that the bank makes mistakes and sometimes they count wrong and to have an unreconciled account is to not know whether it's actually been made right or not and it's out of joint and to reconcile it is to make sure that it's brought back to its proper place and its proper order now clearly some of you who are accountants

I just mangled that pretty badly but that's the idea the idea is that by reconciling accounts you have two things you're making sure this is like this and it's meant the way it's meant to be and you're bringing them back into harmony and to rightness and this is what God is doing with the world he does this look with me again in verses 19 and 20 right he does this by being the one in whom the fullness of God dwells and doing this as you see at the end of this by making peace through his blood what the Bible says is the way that God is going to reconcile the whole world to himself is by the death of Jesus Christ on the cross now how in the world does that actually work

I'm going to step back and do a little bit of biblical theology so you can think about this in the Bible storyline God created a world and in Genesis 1 it said that it was all good and at the very end he said it was very good and it was a creation that was in perfect alignment with God and with his purposes and it reflected his glory in every way possible and just as a side note I think that we have so little imagination to think of how it would be to live in a world where sin was not we have a hard time imagining how beautiful and perfect it was we think about worlds like that and we often have very warped pictures of it where it feels very vanilla and bland and there are sort of clouds and people in long white things and it just feels very unattractive but that's not the picture at all because God created a world that was full of life and abundance and goodness and richness and beauty and joy but into that world then sin came and it didn't just come out of nowhere it came particularly in the form of the rebellion of humanity you see at the pinnacle of this creation

[24 : 20] God had created human beings male and female to be over the created order and under him in perfect alignment and attend this created world and to glorify God by enjoying all that he had made but instead of receiving that gladly and humble submission to God living out that calling humanity rebelled and rejected God and said I would rather be my own God I would rather be my own Lord rather than be in control or rather than submit to you and your control I would rather be my own source of life rather than believing and trusting that you can bring me life and the whole world was broken and so as sin the rebellion of humanity against God then according to Romans 8 corrupted all of the world all of it was subjected to the curse and to futility and so this is the world that we know well and we live in where sin is not only in our hearts because we are selfish and because we don't love

God the way we ought to and because we are hateful and jealous and envious and proud and arrogant and stubborn and all the things that we know are part of our hearts but we also live in a fallen world where ease and decay and we see from in the whole breadth of human experience this fall has corrupted the world such that nothing is as it ought to have been and Christ who rules over it all and made it all for himself has a plan to redeem it to reconcile this broken world back to himself but just as the corruption happened through humanity so the redemption happens through humanity

I don't know if it struck you how odd the order feels sometimes in this but what I'm trying to get at is this is the center piece of how God is going to reconcile the world to himself look with me again he's coming through verses 15 16 17 8 or 15 16 17 God is Christ is the one who's over all of creation he's holding it all together and then in verse 18 it says and he is the head of the body the church has that ever struck you as weird why why why does he suddenly bring up the church when he's getting back to in verse 20 this idea he's going to reconcile the whole thing to himself because sin subjected all of creation to the fall the sin of humanity so the redemption of humanity is the beginning of God's reconciling the whole world to himself the redemption of men and women is the centerpiece it is the lead foot it is the engine that drives the rest of reconciliation and the church as fallen and as broken and as full of warts and ugliness as it has been is

God's intended plan that through the church the proclamation of the good news of the gospel and the lifting up of Christ would be the leading edge of God's redemptive work in this world until the day when he comes back and makes all accounts final and brings a final judgment and a final redemption when he reconciles everything to himself this picture of God's redemptive work in the church as the centerpiece of his redemption is part of what Paul wants us to get from this passage see we wrestle with the fallen world don't we we wrestle with why can't

God just fix it why hasn't he just snapped his fingers and made that wrong right why hasn't he cured that disease and of course as we step back and we think with a little bit more broad we see that God has always been at work and God is graciously restraining evil and as many new diseases as have sprung up so others have abated and gone away as many evils have been perpetrated others have been stopped we have seen God's gracious hand in history but the centerpiece of that has been what he is doing in the church and this is why Jesus Christ is the centerpiece of it because the fullness of God came in human form and offered himself up to redeem fallen humanity the fullness of

[30 : 02] God for the fullness of our sin so that he might redeem us so that then through this church and through his resurrection from the dead he might now bring us into this new hope and this new place where this fallen world doesn't have the last word where what is wrong isn't going to continue to be more wrong forever but because Christ came and lived and died and rose again we know that that's not the end of the story look friends Christ is or God is not sitting up in heaven bemoaning the world wondering oh I don't know maybe I can try to fix this it's a little hard he's not looking at the trials in your life and saying oh

I don't know that's really hard I don't know how to give him a job I know you're lonely sorry I can't do anything about that God is not sitting up impotent hoping for us to fix it but he has acted clearly and decisively and powerfully in the person of Christ the creator dying for his creation the righteous one dying for the unrighteous the image of God dying for those created in the image of God by pouring out his life and death he frees us from death by rising from the dead he breaks the power of sin and death by rising from the dead he makes us as we see at the end of this passage holy and blameless as we saw last week in verses 12 through 14 qualifying us to join in the inheritance of the saints in light being freed from the kingdom of darkness friends it is this good news of the gospel that it is the center piece of what

God is doing and how we can endure when it feels like things are falling apart and how we can endure when it feels like it's all going wrong we look at the cross and we look at the empty tomb and we look at the person of Jesus Christ and we know that the greatness of what he has done outweighs what we see and what we fear this is why in verses 21 through 23 he says and you who were once alienated and hostile in mind doing evil deeds he is now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him if indeed you continue in the faith stable and steadfast not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you have heard friends this is the gospel what

Paul is saying is do not be afraid of what is out there that seems so hard because you know what God has done in your life for you for those of you who have placed your faith in Jesus Christ you know what he's done he's died on the cross for your sin and if God could reconcile you and all the ugliness of your heart and all the rebellion of your life and all the evil that still rises up in your body if he can reconcile you and make you and make you don't you think you can trust him for the world don't you think you can trust him for the shape of your life don't you think that if he can rescue you he can rescue the world if he can turn you from evil deeds don't you think he can transform this ugly world and reconcile it to himself for his glory now look friends

I know one of the questions we wrestle with is why hasn't he why hasn't he yet why is he waiting when the pain continues and the evil seems unabating that's a whole other sermon but I will say this he's doing it because in the meantime he's saving more of us and in his patience he's longing for his redemption to include more and more women and men and he's building a church that trusts not in themselves but trusts in this redeeming reconciling power of Jesus Christ that he would be exalted that he would be lifted up that his redeeming plan and work would be so honored in our midst that we would trust him with all of the rest that's where

[35 : 44] I land on it I don't know why all the time but I look at the cross and I say I can trust you God I can trust you today and I'm not going to move I'm not going to go somewhere else looking for something else that I need to add and so he says to the Colossians and he says to us continue steadfast this gospel is at work it is growing you heard it from me it changed your life it is now being proclaimed to the ends of the earth in increasing fashion in more and more people are hearing about this Christ and as we proclaim Christ as we live out that calling we see God at work and so we are steadfast in hope let's pray Lord we thank you this morning for your word

Lord we thank you how it has revealed to us the greatness of Christ how you have acted in this fallen and broken world to redeem it Lord how you have reminded us that you have held this world together from the very beginning Lord how it was made for you for your glory Lord I pray this morning that we be encouraged to be steadfast and unmoved stable in our faith and trust that Jesus really is enough to be not only our savior but the savior of the whole world we pray this in Jesus name amen